

HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

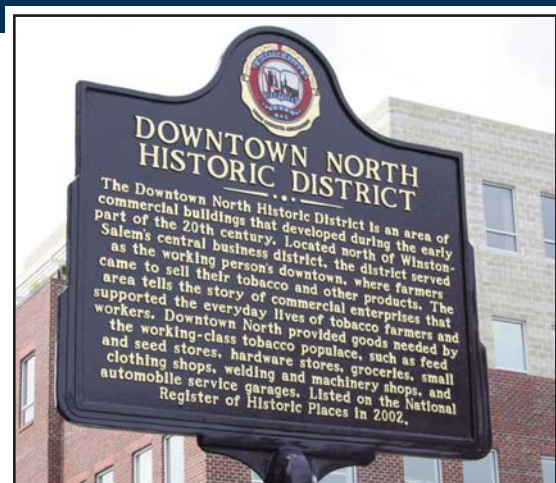
Downtown North Historic District

Twentieth century Winston-Salem was largely a product of the tobacco industry begun in the 1870s and fueled primarily by the efforts of industry giant R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company. The Downtown North Historic District is historically associated with Winston-Salem's working-class tobacco economy, and is located north of W. Fifth Street, and largely concentrated along N. Trade and N. Liberty Streets.

The story of this area is not associated with the generally larger, more ornate, and often architect-designed buildings erected for Winston-Salem's commercial enterprises along W. Fourth Street. Rather, the Downtown North Historic District is associated with the working person's connection with the tobacco industry. The area encompassed by the Downtown North Historic District reflects the trade associated with tobacco and, particularly, the commerce geared toward tobacco farmers and workers who fed the industry. It tells the story of businesses that supported the everyday lives of tobacco farmers and workers. The area provided what workers needed, such as feed and seed stores, hardware stores, groceries, small clothing shops, welding and machinery shops, and automobile service garages.



500 block of North Trade Street,
looking north, 1934
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library
Photograph Collection



The Downtown North Historic District is significant for several reasons. First, the area contributes greatly to Winston-Salem's commercial history. Additionally, the District is significant for its architecture. For the most part, the District's buildings reflect the distinctive characteristics of standard commercial design that was prevalent during the first half of the 20th century and, specifically, the 1920s in downtown Winston-Salem. Throughout the District are straightforward commercial buildings, in which their design is expressed mostly through materials and decorative motifs as opposed to specific architectural styles. Buildings in the District are of mostly brick construction and are generally from one to three stories in height. The District's period of significance spans the years from c. 1907, when the oldest building in the district was erected, to 1952, when the second of two large tobacco warehouses in the block bounded by N. Trade, N. Cherry, W. Fifth, and W. Sixth Streets, was demolished.



North Liberty Street looking south
towards West Fifth Street, 1918
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library
Photograph Collection

Demolitions in the area signaled a shift away from the District's emphasis on tobacco trade and the needs of tobacco farmers to an interest in the more general commercial needs of the community at large.

Today, the area is thriving as home to many of downtown Winston-Salem's art galleries, shops, and restaurants.

Additionally, the first Friday evening of each month is home to a "gallery hop" of various art openings and creative endeavors.

In 2002, the Downtown North Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Downtown North Historic District
National Register Nomination
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY2685.pdf>



This information is also available
at the Forsyth County
Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>